

## *Office of the City Manager*

# Memorandum



**To:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**From:** Natalie Lewis and Brent Stockwell, Assts. to the Mayor and City Council

**Date:** October 18, 2004

**Re:** Overview of Existing Employee Feedback/Recognition Programs

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Some of the most creative and common sense ideas to improve citizen services or save money come from City employees at all levels within the organization. The City has "employee suggestion" programs in place to encourage staff to think creatively and to share their thoughts or ideas—especially when those ideas can increase cost efficiencies and enhance services. Here is a summary of two successful employee feedback and recognition programs.

### **Slice, Stretch and Serve – Employee Superior Performers**

**Program Goal:** The goal of this program is largely two-fold: 1) to encourage employees to think creatively and strategically in order to improve customer service, to cut costs, to add efficiencies that result in staff-time savings, and to stretch/realign resources when needed to achieve excellence in customer service; and 2) to financially reward and recognize employees who demonstrate these behaviors and to promote/model those behaviors within the organization.

**Description:** The Superior Performance Award Program originally was established in FY 1992/93. The program budget started at \$300,000 and grew to almost \$1,000,000 in 2001/02. Originally, each department was provided a percentage funding allocation for employee Superior Performance Awards along with the discretion to administer program guidelines and procedures. This decentralized approach contributed to inconsistencies among departments in how the program was administered. Concerns about the lack of organizational consistency, rising budgetary costs, and controls in the nomination and approval process resulted in the creation of an internal Administrative Regulation in 2002 (Attached). Also in 2002, the program was renamed "Slice, Stretch and Serve" to provide new energy/emphasis to the program and to encourage employee participation. And employees are recognized in a variety of ways, from receiving superior performance checks presented to them at staff meetings to being more formally recognized in front of 800+ of their peers by the City Manager at an All-Employee Forum conducted 3-4 times per year.

### **Examples -- Proven Results:**

- **Slicing Costs by \$5, 500.** Two Traffic Signal Electronic Engineers created a system to test damaged/removed traffic signal models to verify their usability and reliability. Previously, these supplies had been discarded because of the City's need to ensure use of reliable equipment. As a result of this new testing system, the City now has the ability to repair, test reliability factors and to reuse this previously damaged equipment. This new system reduced the City's need to purchase 60 new traffic signal models – a savings of \$5,500 in one year.

- **Slicing Costs by \$23,000.** A stock clerk in the police department found ways to improve and enhance some stocking process inefficiencies that existed, namely overstocking supplies and inefficiencies in the buying process. The new procedures (using an electronic ordering system and maintaining disciplined approach in ordering supplies) resulted in a net dollar savings of \$23,000 in one year.
- **Stretching Resources.** In order to expedite fixing a broken crane at the City's Solid Waste Transfer Station and to avoid spending additional monies to outsource the labor to replace the crane, three Solid Waste Management employees found a way to use existing resources and staffing. They came up with a plan to complete the work themselves in two phases, thus getting the job done quickly, saving funds that would have been spent to bring in outside labor and scheduling the work between shifts so that customer service levels at the facility were maintained at all times.
- **Superior Service to secure \$3M in federal funding.** A Transportation Department employee stepped out of her normal coordination role to apply for and secure a federal grant to purchase seven new trolleys for downtown. She succeeded and secured \$3M in federal grant funds—making Scottsdale the first City to successfully pursue and receive federal funding for specialty vehicles such as trolleys.
- **Slicing inefficiencies and improving services.** Planning and Development Services staff noticed how much staff time it was taking every week to help citizens receive elevation certificates to verify the flood zone and the floor elevations for new construction. After discussing some ideas, this team created an optional on-line system with instructions where citizens can now retrieve certificates themselves electronically. Scottsdale is the first city to have such a system. It saves hours of staff time and improves customer service.
- **Superior Service.** A Water Operations employee involved in valve replacements and upgrading water lines was concerned about the customer impacts, i.e. having to shut off water service during this replacement/upgrade work. He took it upon himself to research a better approach and found a “non-invasive” valve system that now enables the City to install major water lines without disrupting service to customers.
- **Slicing costs by thousands every year and improving service.** A Detention Officer identified a cost savings plan in how the county releases prisoners to Scottsdale Police in order to transport them to Scottsdale for their trial. Instead of completely releasing the prisoners to our custody (which entails detailed paperwork, inventorying prisoner's personal property, etc.), the Officer worked with the County to create a new system. Today, prisoner's are released as “court only” pick ups, thus saving at least one hour of police time each time a prisoner transportation is needed. This minor change in the process is expected to save the City thousands of dollars every year.

## Values in Action – Kachina Awards

**Program Goal:** The employee values (as created by front-line employees) serve as a statement of the kind of organization the City of Scottsdale is. This program was put into place to celebrate and recognize employees who are demonstrating employee values in their work and service to Scottsdale.

**Description:** The *Values in Action* program highlights and shares stories about employee(s) who demonstrate Employee Values, i.e. Plan and Innovate for the Future; Listen, Communicate and Take Action; Focus on Quality Customer Service, etc. A list and description of the Employee Values is attached. These employee stories are shared with employees on-line through *CityLine*, the city's weekly employee newsletter. The most recent Values in Action may be accessed on-line at <http://intranet.ci.scottsdale.az.us/Values/Default.asp>. In addition, once each year just before or following the holidays, the City Manager conducts an All-Employee Forum where the coveted "Kachina Awards" are named. Each award is presented to an employee who has "walked the talk" and served as an organizational leader or role model in demonstrating our employee values. Employees nominate one another, and the nominations are reviewed and selected by a panel of former Kachina winners. The City Manager announces the winners and presents authentic Kachina dolls in glass cases to each employee. These values stories are also celebrated in posters displayed in work areas and in memorabilia (such as coffee mugs or t-shirts) that have been provided and serve as other reminders about the importance values play in this organization.

### Examples -- proven results:

- Listen, Communicate, Take Action -- City Clerk employees helped a young lady get her passport on time by taking extra measures to persuade the U.S. Passport Office to sift through boxes and send it via overnight to help a young lady get to Oxford and her dream of acting.
- Showing Caring and Compassion for Others -- A Water Resource employee while on the job, noticed a house was on fire up around 58th and Montgomery. He immediately called 9-1-1. A neighbor told him that no one was home. He heard a dog inside the house, broke a window and rescued the dog as well. And when Rural/Metro showed up, he helped roll out the hoses to help them respond more quickly.
- Plan and Innovate for the Future -- Eldorado Community Center had numerous maintenance issues with three kilns used for pottery classes. Outside vendors specializing in kiln repair repeatedly replaced components, didn't solve the problem and recommended a \$1,000 upgrade (per kiln) as the only way. A facilities technician took on this project and (without prior experience working with kilns) researched, found parts and fixed our kilns for much cheaper than the vendor's price.
- Focus on Quality Customer Service -- An Information Systems member created a database for the Housing Rehab Program, so they could track their progress, report monthly rehabs and overall demographic population and their needs in order to better respond to revitalization efforts in the mature areas of our community.
- Respect the Individual -- Police Teleserve employees brightened a young child's day, when the child called the Police to report his stolen bike. The employees found someone to donate another bike to him.